WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A bar coding method, comprising:

generating a corroborative signed message from information to be encoded; and

modulating a base image with a graphical encoding of the signed message to produce a marked image.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein generating the signed message comprises producing a cryptographic hash from the information to be encoded.

3.   The method of claim 2, wherein generating the signed message comprises encrypting the cryptographic hash to produce a digital signature.

4.   The method of claim 3, wherein the cryptographic hash is encrypted with a private key.

5.   The method of claim 3, wherein generating the signed message comprises concatenating the information to be encoded and the digital signature.

6.   The method of claim 1, wherein the signed message includes a public key certificate.

7.   The method of claim 1, wherein the base image includes an image of a handwritten signature.

8.   The method of claim 7, wherein modulating the base image comprises vectorizing the handwritten signature image.

9.   The method of claim 8, further comprising obtaining a set of base control points for the vectorized handwritten signature image, and encoding the information by displacing the base control points to obtain a marked set of control points from which the marked image is produced.

10.   The method of claim 1, further comprising extracting the signed message from the marked image.

1   11.   The method of claim 10, wherein the signed message is extracted from
2   the marked image based upon a comparison of the marked image and the base
3   image.

1   12.   The method of claim 10, further comprising decoding the extracted
2   signed message to produce a decoded message.

1   13.   The method of claim 12, further comprising extracting from the
2   decoded message an encrypted original cryptographic hash and the encoded
3   information.

1   14.   The method of claim 13, further comprising decrypting the encrypted
2   original cryptographic hash with a public key.

1   15.   The method of claim 14, further comprising authenticating the
2   extracted information by producing a new cryptographic hash from the extracted
3   information, and comparing the new cryptographic hash with the original
4   cryptographic hash.

1   16.   A bar coding system, comprising an encoder configured to:
2   generate a corroborative signed message from information to be encoded; and
3   modulate a base image with a graphical encoding of the signed message to
4   produce a marked image.

1   17.   A bar coding method, comprising:
2   extracting a signed message from a marked image based upon a comparison
3   of the marked image and a base image;
4   decoding the extracted signed message to produce a decoded message; and
5   extracting from the decoded message information encoded in the marked
6   image.

1   18.   The method of claim 17, further comprising:
2   extracting an encrypted original cryptographic hash from the decrypted
3   message;

4   decrypting the encrypted original cryptographic hash with a public key; and

5   authenticating the extracted information by producing a new cryptographic

6 hash from the extracted information, and comparing the new cryptographic hash

7 with the original cryptographic hash.

1   19.   A bar coding system, comprising a decoder configured to:

2   extract a signed message from a marked image based upon a comparison of

3 the marked image and a base image;

4   decode the extracted signed message to produce a decoded message; and

5   extract from the decoded message information encoded in the marked image.

1   20.   A computer program residing on a computer-readable medium and

2 comprising computer-readable instructions for causing a computer to:

3   generate a corroborative signed message from information to be encoded; and

4   modulate a base image with a graphical encoding of the signed message to

5 produce a marked image.